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Janet Duca Norton: Polo for Wounded Warriors benefit

By Janet Duca Norton For The Daily News Posted: 09/23/2011 09:50:12 PM PDT Updated: 09/23/2011 09:50:12 PM PDT

A sold-out crowd of 500 veterans, polo fans and supporters came to Menlo Circus Club in Atherton for the second annual "Polo for Wounded Warriors" benefit on Sept. 11. Perfect weather, the manicured polo field bordered by festively decorated tables and women wearing summer dresses and picture hats made it look like a scene from a movie.

The tournament featured two games with top U.S. Polo Association players, wine- and beer-tasting, a buffet lunch, auction, a carriage-driving demonstration by the Peninsula Driving Club with U.S. Equestrian Federation team member Kathi Dancer, who was fresh from representing Team USA in the biennial driving competition in Conty, France.

Presented by the Commandery of St. Francis Order of St. John, Knights Hospitaller, and hosted by the Menlo Polo Club, the event raised funds to help wounded veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

This year, two non-profit organizations shared the proceeds. Located in Woodside, the National Council for Equine Assisted Therapy (NCEFT) offers Hippotherapy and therapeutic riding.

Quality of Life Plus is located at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Engineering students employing state-of-the-art technology are developing new devices to help "limbless veterans." Scott Monett, representing Quality of Life, came from Virginia for the event.

At press time, event chairman Christopher Barnes of Knights Hospitaller said no final figures for proceeds were available,

but polo 2011 surpassed last year.

A formal opening ceremony featured the San Mateo County Mounted Patrol posting the colors. Mica Epps, a member of San Francisco Symphony Chorus, sang the National Anthem, and Kevin Sweetman played the bagpipes before the first fast-paced, co-educational polo game.

The final match was exciting with a 7-6 score; the Knights team made the last-minute point against the Coldwell Banker/Menlo Polo team led by Lyn Jason Cobb.

This polo match was more than a spectator sport. At half time, everyone was invited to the field to sip Chandon champagne, stomp divots and participate in the hat contest. Catherine Barnes and Joan Harlem were seen modeling their hats. Jennifer Siedler won the prize, a magnum of Chandon Champagne and a Team Chandon shirt.

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Special guests were veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, including Capt. Rebecca Murgaand Christopher Loverro of the Army, and wounded Marine Sgt. Jarom Lee Vahai, California 2011 Veteran of the Year and President Obama Community Leader Committee member.

Leading the list of older veterans were Maj. Gen. Richard E. Keith (ret.), commander of the St. Francis Commandery, Kermit Laylor, Phil Connolly and Jack Jacoby, president of Veterans Alliance, City College of San Francisco.

Tally Hoedown USA

On Sept. 10, the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton was decorated in red, white and blue for Tally Hoedown USA, the 61st annual Tallyho benefit for Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford.

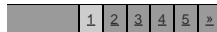
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Janet Duca Norton / Daily News Packard Hospital doctors... (Janet Duca Norton / Daily News)



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